



TRANSITION TOPIC:

Leveraging Critical Friction-Points

TASK: Identify ways to encourage constructive competition and creative cooperation to increase capacity for effective action.

TASK GROUP:

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Defense Business Board

ISSUE:

- An endemic culture of consensus pervades the Department of Defense, hindering innovation and stifling creativity rather than facilitating a “crucible of ideas.”

IMPORTANCE:

- In the current fiscally constrained environment, the next SECDEF will be required to make tough strategic decisions. A culture of creative-tension can increase innovative risk-taking and out-of-the-box ideas.
- The culture of compromise and the involvement of (too) many, results in little accountability or motivation for individuals to excel and few if any sanctions against bad decisions.

“President Eisenhower understood the value of being challenged by his advisers on even his most basic assumptions ... he understood the benefits of disagreement and sought to institutionalize such a debate in an inclusive and integrative fashion.”

Project Solarium report



REPRESENTATIVE FRICTION POINTS:

1. Weapon System Portfolio Management: Within and between Services (e.g. Navy Air vs Navy Surface vs Navy Subsurface)

- a. Each side views their orientation as the most critical for the future
- b. Each side seeks to minimize capabilities of the others

2. Mission Planning: Combatant Commanders vs Services

- a. Combatant Commanders define mission articulating the capabilities and resources required
- b. Services may have different view of their mission role or capabilities being requested

3. Financial Controls: DoD Comptroller vs Title 10 Entities

- a. DoD Comptroller – Wanting to transform the business operations of the Department. Building common business practices DoD-wide, gain control of systems and associated costs
- b. Title 10 Entities (Services) – Wanting to maintain control of programs and budget seen as built to their “unique” requirements

4. Other Friction Points include:

- a. Capability development: Army vs Navy vs Air Force
- b. Major Weapon Program Decisions: DoD vs Services
- c. Spending Plans: Personnel/Health Care obligations vs Weapons Systems obligations



DISCUSSION:

1. Existing “friction points” are rarely used positively
2. Difficult for the SECDEF to make a different, maybe better decision, without alternative facts and understanding
3. Using these inherent DOD checks and balances creates some basic inefficiency, however, they also offer leadership a broader view to enable better decisions
4. Tendency of the Department is to “work things out” (consensus building), typically through horse trading and ultimately watering down solutions so everyone “gets their share” before presenting solutions to leaders
5. Often the “loser” finds alternative ways to get what they want, e.g. turning to congressional stakeholders or working outside the organizational structure



RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Seek alternative views on key decisions. When presented with “black & white” answers, assume that things probably aren’t that clear.**
 - a. Diversity in the broadest sense opens the aperture around ideas
 - b. Alternative views help drive innovative thinking
2. **Question solutions where “everyone gets their share.”**
 - a. The future doesn't offer this option, there will be “haves” and “have-nots”
 - b. Must represent all the Department, not just part of the Department
3. **Use an inclusive Secretary’s senior leader forum (with ongoing support of the Secretary of Defense) to set strategic direction, and develop a culture that rewards appropriate risk-taking**
 - a. Create the environment for the use of friction points
 - b. Must be a forum for challenging ideas as well as driving implementation once the decisions are made
 - c. Use it to test alternative ideas
 - d. Set the performance expectations for the Department
 - e. Challenge approaches and hold people accountable for decision implementation